# Two Servants of God

By

Mahadev Desai

# *Two Servants of God*



*WITH A FOREWORD*

*by*

MAHATMA GANDHI

MAHADEV DESAI

Ed. 1935

*Printed & Published*
*by*
HINDUSTAN TIMES PRESS,
D E L H I

*"My non-violence has almost become a matter of faith with me. I believed in Gandhiji's ahimsa before. But the unparalleled success of the experiment in my province has made me a confirmed champion of non-violence. God willing, I hope never to see my province take to violence. It may be I may fail and a wave of violence may sweep over my province. I will then be content to take the verdict of fate against me. But it will not shake my ultimate faith in non-violence which my people need more than anybody else."*

KHAN ABDUL GAFFAR KHAN

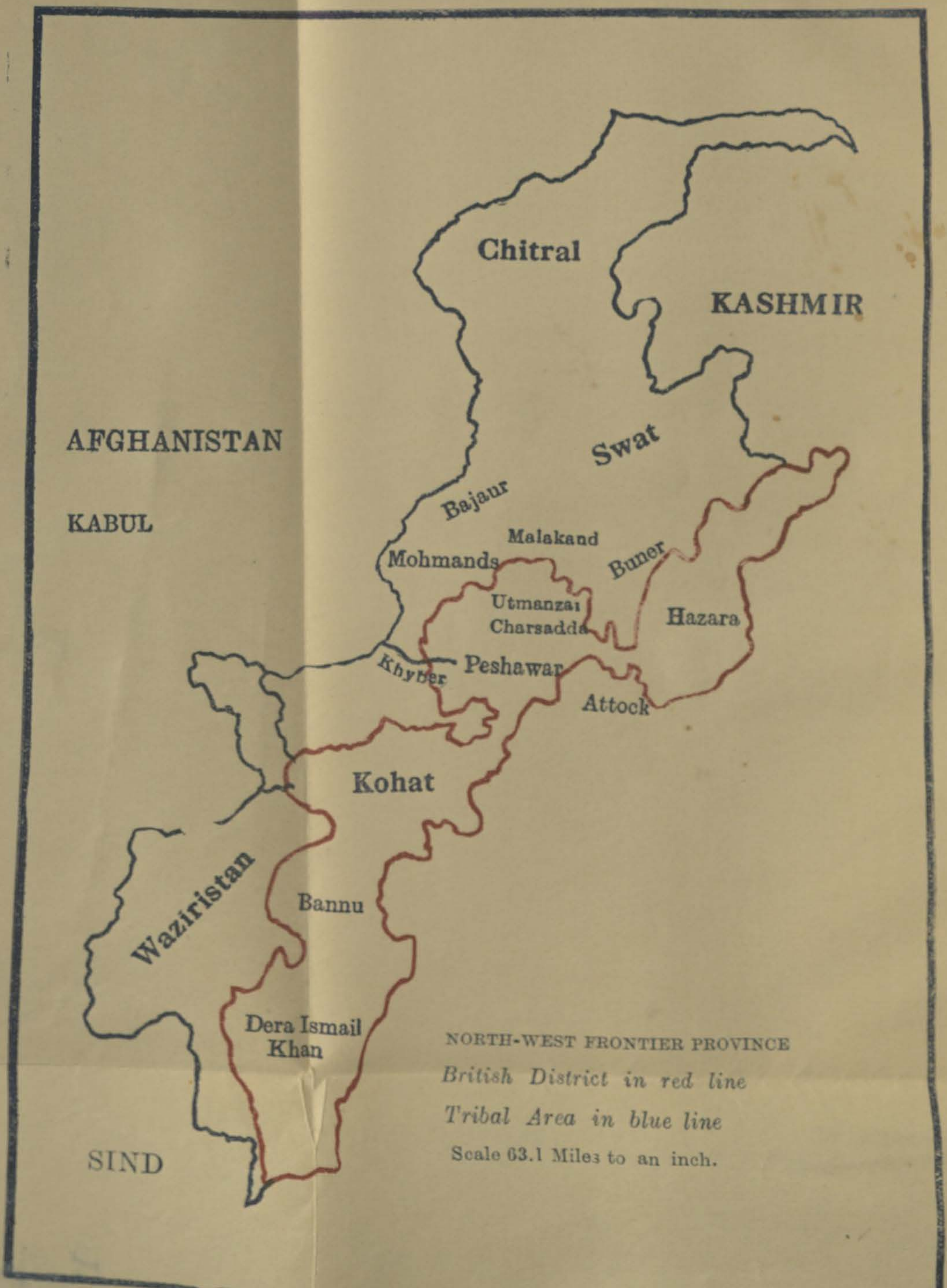
## FOREWORD

Though I had always longed for it, I was never able to be with Khansaheb Abdul Gaffar Khan for any length of time before the closing months of last year. Good fortune, however, brought me not only the younger brother but also the elder, Dr. Khansahib, very soon after their discharge from Hazaribagh Prison. As luck would have it, they were under orders not to enter the Frontier Province till 28th December last. They were under discipline not to offer Civil Disobedience. And so they accepted the hospitality of Seth Jamnalal Bajaj in Wardha. I was thus privileged to come in intimate touch with the brothers. The more I knew them the more attracted I felt towards them. I was struck by their transparent sincerity, frankness and utmost simplicity. I observed, too, that they had come to believe in truth and non-violence, not as a policy but

as a creed. The younger brother, I found, was consumed with deep religious fervour. His was not a narrow creed. I found him to be a universalist. His politics, if he had any, were derived from his religion. The Doctor had no politics. This privileged contact led me to the conclusion that the brothers were much misunderstood. I, therefore, asked Mahadev Desai to note all he could from them of their lives and prepare for the public a sketch introducing them as men. He was to leave politics alone and avoid criticism of the Government. The result is this character-sketch. Let the reader judge whether the brothers' claim to be known as simple *Khudai Khidmatgars* (*i. e.*, Servants of God) is vindicated by the following pages, assuming that they give an accurate and truthful recital of the events of their lives as the brothers gave them to Mahadev Desai.

M. K. GANDHI

DELHI :
14*th January*, 1935.


Chitral
KASHMIR
AFGHANISTAN
KABUL
Swat
Bajaur
Malakand
Mohmands
Buner
Utmanzai
Charsadda
Hazara
Khyber
Peshawar
Attock
Kohat
Waziristan
Bannu
Dera Ismail Khan
SIND
NORTH-WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE
British District in red line
Tribal Area in blue line
Scale 63.1 Miles to an inch.

# TWO SERVANTS OF GOD

## CHAPTER I

### *THE FRONTIER PROVINCE*

THE struggle for India's freedom, which has been going on for the past fifteen years, may be likened to an earthquake in many respects. As it has been strictly non-violent, it lacks some of the volcanic features of an earthquake. But it has stirred our national being to its foundations no less than an earthquake does the earth. Edifices of power and privilege and age-worn prejudices have been thoroughly shaken up, if not yet brought to the ground, and the political topography is no less radically altered than the physical by a natural earthquake.

Twenty years ago who knew Jallianwalla Bagh and Bardoli and Chauri Chaura? And who knew Chirala Perala, Vedaranyam and Borsad? Dandi and

Dharasna and Wadala were known to none but the few scores of people residing near those places. To the historian of the future writing the history of the fight for India's freedom, all the places I have named and many more I could name will have a significance which their positions on the map, if indeed all of them had a place thereon, never gave them.

And if they had no significance twenty years ago, had the whole of the North-West Frontier Province any, until it peered before our vision in 1930 and has since been piercingly visible because of events that we know and more because of events of which we have been ignorant? The handful of us who read the newspapers had indeed a hazy notion of the Frontier Province as some terribly red speck on the north-western horizon, and as soon as there was any mention of it we bethought ourselves of the Britisher's pet bogey of the Russian menace. The student of history strained his eyes for the reality when he read the Britisher's account of punitive tribal expedi-

tions, some of which ended in the British paying the tribes "subsidies" for the latter agreeing to seek their advice on critical occasions. The kidnapping of a Miss Ellis revealed not so much the character of a tribe or people as that all the resources of a mighty Empire could be mobilised when the aggrieved party belonged to the ruling race. The ignorant and the illiterate villager knew that there was a country called *Sarhad* (Frontier) from which usurious and exacting Pathan money-lenders came, to which when they retired with their hoarded interest or with a crime hanging over their head, they were beyond reach.

But 1930 and the years that followed showed that the North-West Frontier Province had men who had felt and thought like us, who had claimed the fight for freedom as their own no less than we in the other provinces of India had done, and who had suffered much more and given greater sacrifices than their brethren in other provinces. Those who had the good fortune to attend the

great Congress session in Karachi in 1931 had for the first time a glimpse of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan Saheb and some of his followers. It was a perfect revelation that the simple, easily excitable, giant-like Pathan could belong to an organization pledged to non-violence and could carry on non-violent activities in face of grave provocation. We read in books about peoples of many lands stories of the stern determination of the Pathan, reminding one of the Roman who thrust his arm into a flame and held it there until it was charred away. A Pathan robber, we are told, was about to be caught whilst boring a hole in a house he had decided to break into. The owner of the house woke up and found a hand thrust through the opening. He seized hold of it and shouted for help. Rather than be caught, the thief severed the hand at the wrist and left the owner of the house staggering back with the severed limb! The non-violent struggle, in which the Pathan had taken part, had the same stories to tell of his cool courage and determination but of a more ennob-

ling type. Haji Shah Nawaz Khan, one of the Khan Brothers' cousins, was in prison in 1930, under the Security section. Domestic circumstances compelled him to pay the security to secure release. Whatever the circumstances, however, not one of his relations outside could be reconciled to his having paid the security, and they suggested that he should do some act in breach of security and go back to prison. He thought about it for a while, and then quietly killed himself, leaving a note in which he said that going back to prison was no reparation for the disgrace that he had brought upon the family! Death could be the only reparation! Syed Abdul Wadud Badshah, a prominent worker and a great religious head and zamindar, not belonging to the British districts of the Frontier, but belonging to the Malakand Agency, was in prison for nearly three years under the Security section; he was not even released during the Truce of 1931; his father, decrepit, old and very near death's door, paid the security that he might see the son before he passed away. The Syed

was exasperated at the way his release had been brought about. So deep was his sense of shame that reckless of the pain he would cause to the old father he shot himself dead.

Who would not like to know more of the indomitable race that produces such heroes? I have the rare good fortune of knowing intimately the Khan Brothers who have just been released from the Hazaribagh Jail where they were detained as State prisoners. Intimacy has but deepened the affection and regard I had for these brothers. They have permitted me to ask them all sorts of questions about their lives. The story they have told me is so enthralling that I must reduce a part of it to writing and share it with the public. The public know that the Brothers, though they have been discharged from prison, are under orders not to enter the Frontier Province. When the reader has finished reading the story of the Brothers, they will wonder with me why they are debarred from entering their own province.



KHAN ABDUL GAFFAR KHAN, DR. KHANSAHIB

## CHAPTER II

### *BIRTH AND PARENTAGE*

"I COULD tell you the year of my birth," said the younger of the Khan Brothers, "but not the date. For I know the date according to the lunar month Jeth, but not the Christian date."

"Jeth!" I exclaimed rather surprised. "We too have got Jeth."

"Oh, yes. You and we have more things in common than we know. Our traditions are the same, many of our customs are the same, and after all it should not be forgotten that for centuries the religion of people of our parts was Buddhism. Our district is strewn with relics of the Buddhist times and the names of some of the towns are Buddhist or Hindu, and quite a number of Pushtu words are derived from Sanskrit," said Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan.

Dr. Khan Sahib, the elder brother,

was born in 1883, and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, the younger brother, was born in 1890. They come of a family of Khans belonging to the Mohmadzai tribe. "Zai" means literally "born of" and indicates descent, and Khan means "chief." All the tribes on the Frontier derive their names from their oldest ancestors. The Brothers' father, Khan Saheb Bahram Khan, was the Khan of the village of Utmanzai in the Charsadda tehsil of the district of Peshawar. Charsadda is twenty miles from Peshawar, and Utmanzai is beautifully situated on the river Swat, about two miles from Charsadda. For about twenty miles west is the territory of the Mohmand tribes through which one enters Afghanistan. Born and bred in these surroundings, they are children of Nature and find themselves rather uncomfortable in our modern seats of civilisation—though we must remember that the elder brother has had the bulk of his education in England and has spent about eleven years abroad. But often enough in their talks their thoughts run back to those hills and the river and the

little island in the river on which they have built a little bit of a retreat where it is their dream one day to have Gandhiji for their guest. "You will have your Ashram there, Mahatmaji," they say, "and we could not think of more peaceful and beautiful surroundings. The whole Peshawar Valley abounds in fruits of all kinds and we assure you that you will put on pounds of weight there." They talk of their sugar-cane fields and the rich creamy milk of their cows which they use exclusively for butter and of their buffaloes which they use for all other purposes. "But where those fields are and what is happening to them to-day we do not know," they say with a sigh which indicates no defeat or despair, but the natural home-sickness of an exile.

But to return to their good father. When the Brothers told me the story of their father, I was put in mind of the story of the Patel Brothers' father. Both the stories are full of interesting parallels. Both the old Patel and the old Khan were deeply religious, both lived to a ripe

old age—over ninety—and both had pretty nearly the same share in the upbringing of their children. But there the parallel ends. For whilst one may call the Patel Brothers absolutely self-made, one may not perhaps say that the Khan Brothers are self-made quite to the same extent. For the old Khan was one of the chiefs of one whole village—something like a Zamindar—and had at least the wherewithal to send his son to England. The Patel Brothers' father had a much more modest income and his sons had to educate themselves. The old Patel was more of a recluse than a man of the world, but the old Khan wielded such influence that when he was over eighty he had to be imprisoned soon after the younger son in 1919!

"Both my father and my mother live in our memory as the supreme examples of a truly religious life," said Abdul Gaffar Khan. "Both of them were unlettered, but both lived more in the world of the spirit than of the flesh. My mother would often enough sit down

after her *namaz* (prayer) to meditate in silence and stillness. I have yet to know two more God-fearing souls.

"My father throughout his life made many friends and no enemies. In fact, without mentioning the names of some of the nearest and dearest relations, I may say that my father had many enemies who at the end of their days repented of the treatment they had given him and died his devoted friends. He knew no revenge and he had something in him which instinctively told him that there was no dishonour in being deceived, it lay in deceiving. He was a man of his word and he was so transparently truthful that not even his enemies dared to disbelieve or contradict him. Crowds of people would come and deposit their savings with him without ever asking for a receipt and they knew that his was a bank which would never fail. He never believed in dancing attendance on those in authority, but the mightiest in the land held him in awe. The biggest of the British officials would address him

as 'Uncle' and think twice before they could decide to displease him."

"How long did he live?" I asked. "Did he interest himself in our fight for freedom?"

"He died in 1926 at the age of 95. I cannot say that he understood the implications of the struggle. But he was in favour of reform in all spheres. In our days, priests used to look askance at men sending their boys to the modern schools. But he would not countenance the prejudice. When the Rowlatt Bill agitation came, I threw myself into it. I was immediately arrested. There was on the 6th of April a meeting in Utmanzai of over a hundred thousand people. My father attended the meeting. After my arrest, there were attempts to implicate several people. For over a fortnight they would not say where I was. The Police Chief came with a *jirga* (deputation) to my old father and tried to frighten him. 'They will shoot the Badshah,' they told him."

"Badshah?" I asked in wonder.

"Yes," said Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, laughing. "I was *Badshah* then! They used to call me by that name."

"Reminds me of the 'King of the Jews'," I said.

"Well, that is so good of you. All that they wanted was to frighten my father by giving him threats of imposing a heavy sentence on me."

"What was the upshot?"

"The upshot was that my father was also arrested with several members of the family."

"The arrest must have been too much for the old man?"

"On the contrary, he was mighty glad to be brought to the same jail. 'How happy I am to be imprisoned!' he exclaimed. 'Otherwise I should not have been able to see you for days or years, who knows'?"

"And how long did he suffer imprisonment?"

"For a little over three months. For Sir George Roos Keppel followed a policy of placating the Pathans, and even I was not kept for more than six months."

The old gentleman died in 1926. He never knew the date of his birth, but the sons fancied he had approached, if not passed, a century. For though he could not tell his age, he had the most vivid recollections of the Mutiny of '57, when he was in the prime of life. He was never proud of the record of the Pathans during that critical period and the Brothers recall, not without a certain sense of shame, how their old father used to tell them of their elder uncle who served the British so nobly by commanding the military guard of the Charsadda Treasury.

"Where is there cause for shame?" I asked. "I remember Pandit Motilalji telling me that his father and uncle also served the British during the Mutiny."

"That may be," said the elder Khan. "But somehow, I do not think it is pleasant to recall the part played by the Sikhs and Pathans during the Mutiny."

"They were different times. Is it not good that two great families with such historic traditions should be pledged to sacrifice their all in the fight for freedom?"

"It is, indeed."

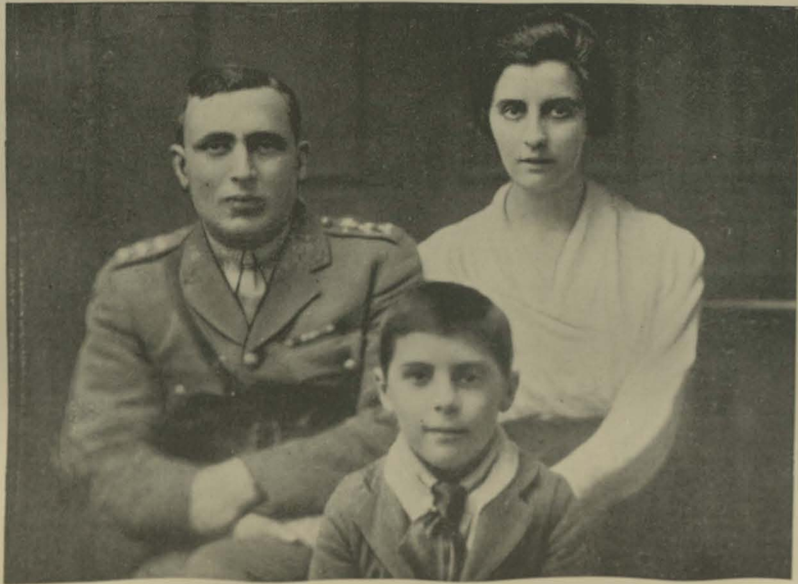
I cannot conclude this chapter without referring to the deep emotion with which the Brothers always mention their father—especially his boundless charity—charity which includes loving-kindness and long-suffering. It is this father from whom the sons have inherited their instinctive adherence to non-violence.

## CHAPTER III

### *EARLY YEARS*

THAT led up to the story of the Brothers' early years. I was eager to know how in that dark province the Brothers managed to get the education they did and how they came to join the movement for freedom.

"I have told you," said the younger Khan, "how all education in schools was taboo in our parts. There were *maktabs* in mosques where *maulvis* taught the Holy Koran and gave a smattering of the secular subjects. But with the advent of the British even the *maktabs* went under and very few schools took their place. There was a strong prejudice against these schools, but my father conquered this prejudice and sent us to a Mission School in Peshawar. My brother passed the Punjab University Matriculation, did a year at the Grant Medical College, Bombay, and proceeded to England to finish his medical studies. There was



DR. KHANSAHIB, CHILD JOHN, MRS. MAY KHANSAHIB
*(Photo taken when Dr. Khansahib was in active service during the War)*

quite an uproar in our community when the question of sending my brother to England came up. There was the fear of his turning Christian; there was also the fear of his settling down there and not returning home, and of his marrying an English girl, which did prove true. But my father had the broadest views in these matters and said he was not going to stand in the way of his sons' education. I unfortunately did not pass the Matriculation examination. The question of sending me to England was also discussed and I should indeed have gone but for two or three deaths in the family which were considered to be anything but propitious for my going for higher studies. These domestic events and the superstitions attaching thereto robbed me of two precious years and the fact of my brother having married an English girl finally sealed the fate of my visit to England, and my studies too came to a standstill.

But even the brief career at the Mis-

sion School was not without its lesson for the young Khan. Both the Brothers cherish the memory of the then Principal of the school, Rev. Wigram, whose character and self-sacrifice had endeared him to his pupils. The younger Khan made some kind of a resolve to serve his community as his Principal had served his faith in a missionary spirit. Before, however, the talk of his going abroad was given up, and before he entered on his mission of service, he nursed for a while the ambition to serve in the Army and distinguish himself as a soldier. The Pathan is a born soldier, and his application for a commission in the Army had the added recommendation of his coming of a rich aristocratic family, and so it was accepted. "The military rank," said Khansaheb to me, "was not without its glamour. There were several people of my acquaintance who enjoyed high positions, and I flattered myself that I was specially fitted to look like, and enjoy an equal footing with, Englishmen. But Allah had willed it otherwise. I was on a visit to a friend in the Army

and I saw with my own eyes the disagreeable spectacle of his being grossly insulted by a British officer of inferior rank. That decided me and saved me from a military career. After this I spent about a year at Aligarh. It whetted my appetite for Urdu studies and I became a keen student of Maulana Zafar Ali Khan's *Zamindar* and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad's famous Urdu weekly *Al Hilal*, which was unfortunately suppressed during the War. But my political education may be said to have begun with these studies and my interest in national education dates as far back as 1911 when I took an active part in establishing several national schools in the province. When after the War the Rowlatt Bills were presented to us as a reward of our services, I had no hesitation in plunging into the agitation that was launched by Mahatma Gandhi. There were unprecedented *hartals* in our province as everywhere, and I have already told you how my old father attended the meeting at Utmanzai on the 6th of April, where no less than a hundred thousand people had

gathered. There was no overt action of Satyagraha. The fact of our having had this meeting was quite enough for the authorities. Though I was arrested, there was no kind of trial. I was asked if I was a 'Badshah of the Pathans.' I said I did not know it, but I knew that I was a servant of the community and that we could not take these Bills lying down. The *jirga* that waited in deputation on me used all kinds of threats and all kinds of specious arguments. I shall just cite one. It was this, that the Frontier Crimes Regulation, which was already in force in the province, was, if anything, worse than the Rowlatt Bills, and that if the Pathans had no grievance against the Regulation it was hardly fair for them to join in the agitation against the Rowlatt Bills! Besides, when British India had so far hardly ever shown any sympathy for the Pathans, why should the Pathans be anxious to run any risk for the ungrateful people in British India? But this argument, like the previous one, fell flat upon me. I remained adamant and so there was nothing for it but to arrest me with

a number of others."

"I should like to know how you were treated at the time of this your first imprisonment," I asked.

"Well, I was not only an ordinary convict but a most dangerous convict. I was taken to the jail handcuffed and I had fetters on all the time of my imprisonment. I was twice my present bulk in those days, weighing 220 lbs., and there were no fetters to fit my legs. Whether a special pair was made or not, I do not know. But they were hard put to it to find a pair, and when they did put one on me, the portion above the ankle bled profusely. That apparently did not worry the authorities who said I should not take long to get accustomed to them! As though this was not enough, they made a most vicious attempt to implicate me in a serious offence. A Pathan from my village had been tried and convicted for having tampered with the telegraph wires and was asked if he knew me. He replied in the affirmative. He said he had joined

the movement because of my appeal. 'Well then,' he was asked, 'did he not instigate you to break the wires?' To which he gave an emphatic No."

"But what was happening to the elder brother during all this while?" I wondered. I was told that he had taken his degree of M. R. C. S. (Lond.) from St. Thomas' Hospital and had gone to the front. After the War he was serving in France when the agitation here broke out. Not a letter from India reached him. He tried to return home, but he had to wait six months in London until he could get his embarkation orders in 1920. Thus whilst his father and brother and other relations were in jail, he was serving the British in France and was deliberately kept in ignorance of the happenings at home. On return here, it was with the greatest possible difficulty that he could obtain permission to resign.

Whilst the elder brother settled down to practise medicine, the younger interested himself more and more in the Congress

and the Congress cause. On one occasion whilst speaking to Gandhiji he said: "One learns a good deal, Mahatmaji, in the school of suffering. I am just trying to think what would have happened to me if I had had an easy life, and had not had the privilege of tasting the joys of jail and all it means. The imprisonments that followed were by no means the ordeals that the first and the second one were, but I am deeply thankful that God imposed on me that severe discipline in the very beginning of my career."

The Khansaheb attended the Nagpur Congress in 1920, took a leading part in the Khilafat agitation, though he later resigned his office as President of the provincial organisation, and led a numerous party of *Muhajarins* (pilgrim-exiles) who went through untold suffering in their march to and back from Afghanistan. "My old father, who was nearly ninety years old then, was eager to join the party," said the elder brother to me, "but I interfered and pleaded with him to desist if not in the interests of his own health,

at least in the interests of the paternal estate. He had a better physique than any one of us and could walk long distances even at that age. It was with some difficulty that he could be dissuaded." I need not tarry to recount the details of that ill-starred adventure which deserves mention only for the heroic resolve of the aged parent and the suffering that the younger Khan and his brother pilgrims underwent.

1921 again found Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan in jail under the omnipotent Security section 40 of the Frontier Crimes Regulation. The circumstances are worth noting. He had soon after his return from the Nagpur Congress laid the foundation of constructive activity by establishing a national school at Utmanzai, his village, and was trying to establish branch schools all over the province. There was no question of civil disobedience, but this part of the constructive programme had appealed to him greatly and he bent his energies to its accomplishment. But even this was enough to

alarm the authorities. Objection was taken to his touring the districts and he was asked to furnish security which he refused. Sir John Maffey, the Chief Commissioner, tried to persuade the father to ask his son to close down the school. It was anti-British, said he to the old Khan. "Why should your son take it upon himself to establish this school, when no one else is interested in it?" he suggested to the father. The old Khan spoke to the son about it. The son replied in a manner that went home. "Father," he said, "supposing all the other people ceased to take interest in the *namaz*, would you ask me also to give it up and forsake my duty, or would you ask me to go on with the religious duty in scorn of consequences?"

"Certainly not," said the father. "I would never have you give up your religious duties, no matter what others may do."

"Well, then, father, this work of national education is like that. If I may

give up my *namaz*, I may give up the school."

"I see," said the father, "and you are right." Thus Sir John's plans were foiled, with the result that Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan was sentenced to three years' rigorous imprisonment for the offence of teaching the Pathan boys in his own way.

The suffering that he went through during this incarceration completed the baptism that had begun in 1919. It is a most moving story. Solitary cells, fetters for months, grinding for prison task and what not. The rigours left him physically weaker. He lost 55 lbs. in weight and had scurvy and lumbago for chronic companions. But his spirit burned brighter with increasing trials. Persecution and persuasion were alternately used to break his spirit without avail. Sir John Maffey once sent Khan Bahadur Abdur Rahim Khan to him with a message that Sir John did not object to the Utmanzai school, but that he wanted the Khansaheb to undertake not to tour

the villages. If he gave the promise, he should be immediately released. Needless to say, he rejected the offer.

But I would like to dwell at some length on the moral and spiritual side of this imprisonment. I have heard some of the stories of his experiences with admiration not only for his brave spirit, but for the exemplary manner of his life in jail. He was a model prisoner. He would brook no breach of jail discipline, would expect or accept no favours and compromise no principle. There were officials who would accommodate him and go out of their way in relaxing the rigours that they were bound to impose on him under the rules. He implored them to do no such thing. There were poor convict warders who would gladly do the task for him, or have him exempted from the task in other ways. "Let me tell you in all frankness," he would gently warn them, "that I cannot possibly tell lies." There was quite a lot of petty corruptions going on in jails, then as now. Exemption from tasks and remissions

could be easily bought. He detested this practice and exhorted the convicts that he came across to eschew it. He even advised the poor constables not to soil their hands with corruption. In one case a man piteously said to him: "I find it impossible otherwise to make both ends meet." "I will not tell you what to do. But I may tell you that what you are doing is bad and immoral." The man resigned. This was more than the authorities could bear. There was absolutely no political meaning to be attached to this, but interested parties did so. Even if it was his moral influence, they thought that it was out of place in a prison! He was transferred from his province to a Punjab jail where he had the good fortune to be placed with other political prisoners. Here too the model prisoner carried with him his strict disciplined way of life. What the prison authorities found it difficult to tolerate in the Frontier jails, his fellow-prisoners found it difficult to appreciate in this Punjab jail. But he saw no reason to revise his attitude. "Once you com-

promise a principle, you not only compromise truth, but you compromise self-respect," he said to me; "and I know that those who did not think it a serious matter to receive contraband articles through obliging sources ended ultimately by bidding good-bye to their own self-respect." But this imprisonment in a Punjab jail also proved for him rich in spiritual experience.

He established life-long contacts with Hindu and Sikh friends and began his study of their faiths and cultures. "I read the Gita for the first time here," he said to me; "and I also read the Granth Saheb and also the Bible. I thought this was the least that I owed to my friends of these faiths. I should not be able to understand them properly and to value their friendship if I did not know their books. I must say, however, that I found that the Gita was then beyond me. I read it over and over again. I had not then perhaps the intellectual equipment for it, or perhaps receptivity. It was Pandit Jagatram,

from the Andamans, who really taught me the Gita in 1930. He had a passion for it and he made me enter into its spirit." The name "Frontier Gandhi," affectionately used by his admirers and slightingly by "enemies," would seem to derive from this period. He had studied Gandhiji's life critically and had always showed a readiness to take a leaf out of his book. During this imprisonment he not only kept a fast once a week, but also observed silence for a day each week. This was enough to earn him the title, though bigots of his own community have gone the length of labelling him a "Hindu," as blind *Sanatanists* have not spared Gandhiji choice labels.

The darkest of our days, 1924-1929—years of acute Hindu-Muslim tension—found him absolutely unaffected by the raging passions of the hour. He kept himself severely aloof from all activities of a narrow communal type, and without mentioning them one may say that there have been occasions in his life when he refused to be drawn into the surging

tide. "Let me tell you," said Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan to me once with considerable feeling, "I do not measure the strength of a religion by counting heads. For what is faith until it is expressed in one's life? It is my inmost conviction that Islam is *amal, yakeen, muhabbat* (right conduct, faith, love), and without these one calling himself a Musalman is like sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. The Koran-e-Shareef makes it absolutely clear that faith in One God without a second and good works are enough to secure a man salvation."

And yet he is no less a Musalman than any orthodox Musalman. I do not think he has ever missed a single *namaz*, and has the spirit of brotherhood innate in himself more than many so-called orthodox Musalmans. The elder brother having spent many years abroad, and claiming as he does friends of various nationalities and creeds, is somewhat of an eclectic, but he has inherited his father's religious spirit no less than the

younger brother. Often enough he says in jest, "My brother offers the *namaz* on my behalf also," but he feels deeply hurt when anything compromising the liberal spirit of any true religion is mentioned. I once showed the Brothers a cutting from an ultra-orthodox weekly issued by a Musalman containing criticism of Gandhiji's fast, and asked them whether, as the writer maintained, Islam sanctioned fasting only of the orthodox type obtaining to-day and no other. "What does he mean by an orthodox fast we should like to know," they asked. I explained that the true fast, according to Islam, in the opinion of the writer, consisted in abstinence from all food and all drink during daytime and breaking the fast between sundown and daybreak. "Absurd," said the younger brother indignantly. "I myself observed complete fast all the seven days that Gandhiji fasted in August last, drinking salt and water of evenings! It is a mockery of Islam to say that the fast, as is observed by the bulk of Musalmans, is the only true one. The Prophet observed

complete fasts, days and nights. I think he permitted eating after sunset out of consideration for human weakness. The Prophet needed no food, because, as he said, Allah sent him spiritual food which ordinary mortals could not get, as they had not the faith that is needed for it. This paper's criticism is on a par with the one that tried to make me out to be a Hindu because I was observing silence every week or because I studied the Gita."

## CHAPTER IV

### *THEIR VIEWS ON RELIGION*

THAT brings me to the articles of their faith. It is very necessary both for Hindus and Musalmans to know what constitutes the Khan Brothers' strength and what makes them true champions of Hindu-Muslim unity. Casually Gandhiji was once inquiring about the English wife of Dr. Khansahib and asked if she was a convert to Islam. "You will be surprised," said the younger Khan, "that I cannot say whether she is a Musalman or Christian. She was never converted—that much I know—and she is completely at liberty to follow her own faith, whatever it may be. I have never so much as asked her about it. And why should I? Why should not a husband and wife adhere each to their respective faiths? Why should marriage alter one's faith? You will be amused to hear that my brother's son, who has just passed his London Matriculation and proposes to go

to Oxford, tells us in one of his letters that boys regard him as a Christian and that he does not know what to tell them !"

"I see," said Gandhiji, considerably surprised. "What you say about your brother's wife does surprise me agreeably. What would other Musalmans say? Many do not think like you in this matter?"

"No, I know that they do not think so. But for that matter, not one in a hundred thousand knows the true spirit of Islam. That is at the back of most of our squabbles and interested parties on both sides have simply fanned the flames of passion and prejudice. To what depths of degradation we have fallen ! When I was in Gujrat jail in 1930, I decided to devote my time to cultivating an acquaintance with my Hindu brethren and we decided that in order to understand one another better we should have Gita and Koran classes, each to be conducted by men who could teach with knowledge and authority. The classes went on for some time, but ultimately

they had to be discontinued for want of any other pupil but myself in the Gita class and for want of more than one pupil in the Koran class—I forget now this friend's name. But each of us incurred a lot of odium, I being railed at as a Hindu and the other friend as a Musalman.

"But I kept on my reading of the Gita which I read thrice. I think at the back of our quarrels is the failure to recognise that all faiths contain enough inspiration for their adherents. The Holy Koran says in so many words that God sends messengers and warners for all nations and all peoples and they are their respective prophets. All of them are *Ahle Kitab*—Men of the Book—and the Hindus are no less *Ahle Kitab* than Jews and Christians."

"But that is not the orthodox Musalman opinion?"

"I know. But they fail to see that the Hindus and their books are not mentioned in the Koran-e-Shareef, because the list

there is not exhaustive, but merely illustrative. The Koran-e-Shareef simply lays down the principle, namely, that those who have had inspired books come within the category of *Ahle Kitab*, and I am absolutely clear that the meaning of the text includes all people who have inspired books to govern their faith and conduct. And I would go even further and say that the fundamental principles of all religions are the same, though details differ because each faith takes the colour and flavour of the soil from which it springs.

"To take a simple illustration. Both Islam and Hinduism lay the greatest emphasis on cleanliness. There is not, there cannot be, any difference between them on the question of cleanliness as such. But practice differs. Islam lays down the use of dry tooth-brushes, Hinduism of fresh green tooth-brushes. Hinduism insists on ablutions daily or even oftener, whereas Islam insists on a full ablution at least once a week. What does this show? They merely show that Hinduism sprang

out of the Gangetic soil where there was no dearth of water and that Islam sprang out of a desert soil where sometimes it was impossible to get a drop of water for days. But that does not mean that Islam can have anything to say against Musalmans having a daily bath or using fresh tooth-brushes. The difference in the practices enjoined by several religions means nothing more than the fact that each faith sprang from its own particular soil. I should not, therefore, disturb anyone's faith. I cannot contemplate a time when there will be one religion for the whole of the world. Every community will have to derive sustenance from its own faith and it is no use one community trying to disturb the faith of the other."

That, however, does not mean that, in the Brothers' opinion, there should be water-tight compartments between the communities. There could be no greater mistake than to think so. "The cries we hear at every railway station of 'Hindu water', 'Islami water'. 'Hindu tea', and

'Islami tea', take our breath away," they are not tired of repeating everywhere. "Why should a Hindu and a Musalman have any objection to drinking clean water from each other's vessel?"

There can be, however, no question of compulsion in this matter as in any other, and no one knows and insists on this more than Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. There is an incident of the days of 1922 when he was in Dera Gazi Khan jail which I am tempted to mention in this connection to show the Khansaheb's delicate regard for the susceptibilities of others. He had given up meat for over six months, simply out of regard for the feelings of vegetarian brother-prisoners. But his health suffered and the doctor advised him strongly to have mixed diet if he did not want to lose all his teeth. He reluctantly agreed, but then there was the question of cooking the meat. The Superintendent said it should be cooked in the general kitchen. The Khansaheb said that he would rather go without it than have it

cooked in the general kitchen and injure his vegetarian brethren's susceptibilities, with the result that the Superintendent was good enough to have it cooked in a separate kitchen. The Khansaheb's delicate regard for his friends carried him to the extent of ordering no meat to be cooked in his own house during all the time that Sjt. Devadas Gandhi was the Brothers' guest in 1931. But he also holds, and rightly, that even so should the Hindus have a tender regard for the practices of Musalmans. It is a pathetic reflection that when on medical advice he had to start taking meat diet in 1922, some of the Sikh and Hindu friends could not tolerate it. This intolerance is our bane. "Without a tender regard for the feelings of one another we are never going to achieve Hindu-Muslim unity," he has told me times without number.

But whatever the present conditions, and however dark the present outlook, the Brothers' faith in Hindu-Muslim unity is undimmed. They have never

doubted that it is going to be a settled fact and that the leaders of both the communities have to sacrifice their all in the attempt to achieve it.

"When we went to..........," said the younger brother, "I met a Maulvi in charge of a mosque who seriously took me to task for preaching Hindu-Muslim unity. 'What a vain attempt!' he said. 'They are all idol-worshippers. How can we have any dealings with them? You seem to be going against the teachings of Islam.' I pulled him up and said: 'If they are idol-worshippers, what are we? What is this worship of tombs? How are they any the less devotees of God when I know that they believe in one God? And why do you despair of Hindu-Muslim unity? No true effort is vain. Look at the fields over there. The grain sowed therein has to remain in the earth for a certain time, then it sprouts, and in due time yields hundreds of its kind. The same is the case about every effort in a good cause."

In another place a Musalman editor went to them with practically the same plea as the Maulvi in the foregoing paragraph, urging different grounds. "Why will you plough the sands? These Hindus can never be trusted. Don't you know Shivaji?" he asked.

The elder brother had no difficulty in giving him short shrift. "So you think you know Shivaji! What will you say if a Hindu comes calling Aurangzeb all kinds of names and saying that therefore all Musalmans cannot be trusted by Hindus? Well, well, my friend, both Shivaji and Aurangzeb are dead and let us not worry about them. What do you say about Mahatma Gandhi? So long as you think that he can be trusted, all is well. So long as we brothers are trust worthy, we can ask Hindus to trust us. Do not judge a community by those who, you think, are its worst representatives, but by its best."

"We have heard doubts expressed about your Harijan movement, too, Mahatmaji," said the younger brother

once. "Even the Yeravda Pact and the 21 days' fast have been misunderstood and we have been told that you had become a communalist. We have stoutly refused to countenance any such criticism. Yours is a purely humanitarian movement and those who belong to a faith have absolutely no business to treat their other brethren of faith as untouchables. We sent you from jail a telegram, to congratulate you, you will remember. Of course your reply took days in being delivered to us!" And both had a hearty laugh.

Not only had they appreciated the fasts, but they had come to the heroic determination of giving up meat, and had not touched it since then in jail. Even outside jail they have continued the practice, except when they go to households where meat is cooked and where they may have to sit down to eat without previous notice. The younger brother not only fasted with Gandhiji during the last fast, but he added one more article to his self-denying ordinance.

He gave up tea which he was very fond of. "I would get a headache whenever I missed my tea, and I would take plenty of it whenever I took it, but it is surprising that whenever I fast I do not miss it at all, and so I had no hesitation in giving it up," he said to me one day. But the elder brother is anxious about the younger brother's health, and often raises a protest against his self-denials. And it is quite natural. He who was 220 lbs. in 1919 weighs now something like 170 lbs. That really is the toll that imprisonment has claimed.

But I have digressed. Islam, to them, is no narrow creed and they implicitly believe that it is just because one is a devout Muslim that one should be a worker in the cause of unity and of the Indian National Congress. "I am surprised," he said at a mass meeting in 1931, "that the very name of the Congress scares away some of my Musalman brethren. They think that the Congress is a Hindu organisation and that therefore they may have nothing

to do with it. There never was a more incorrect description of a body, which is essentially national in character. I appeal to my brethren to study the aims and objects and the rules and constitution of the Congress. Briefly, the Congress aims at liberating the people from slavery and exploitation, or, in other words, the Congress aims at being able to feed India's hungry millions and clothe India's naked millions. I want you to read the history of Islam, and ask you to consider what the Prophet's mission was. It was to free the oppressed, to feed the poor and to clothe the naked. Therefore the work of the Congress is nothing but the work of the Prophet, nothing inconsistent with Islam.

"Seeing this as clearly as daylight, I do not understand how Musalmans can remain aloof from the Congress. Then we come to the creed of non-violence. There is nothing surprising in a Musalman or a Pathan like me subscribing to that creed. It is not a new creed. It was followed 1,400 years ago by the

Prophet all the time he was in Mecca and it has since been followed by all those who wanted to throw off an oppressor's yoke. But we had so far forgotten it that when Mahatmaji placed it before us we thought he was sponsoring a novel creed or a novel weapon. To him belongs the credit of being the first amongst us to revive a forgotten creed, and to place it before a nation for the redress of its grievances.

"To Hindus and Musalmans I would say, this fight for freedom is for the liberation of both. The Hindus are obliging none by taking part in the struggle and the Musalmans will oblige none by joining the Hindus. There are influences enough to divide us. You in India are familiar with the cry of the Afghan bogey. We have been made familiar of late with the cry of Hindu rule,—a rule of the rich Hindu, of the educated Hindu, of the nationalist Hindu. To those who come to warn me against a Hindu rule I say, perhaps, it may be better to be slaves under a neighbour than under a perfect stranger."

## CHAPTER V

### *KHUDAI KHIDMATGARS*

On his release from jail in 1924, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan settled down to the quiet work of social reform, though he did attend the various sessions of the Congress. Remarkably simple in his habits, and unassuming to a fault, there is no wonder that he should not have attracted much attention and certainly escaped the glare of limelight. But as we know already, he could not quite escape it in his province. We have seen how in 1921 he had established a national school in Utmanzai. It is this school which turned out numerous workers and which suffered in 1932 the same fate as the Gujarat Vidyapith in Ahmedabad. These workers may be said to be the nucleus of the vast organisation that some years later came to be known as the *Khudai Khidmatgars*. Being essentially a man of God, Khansaheb could not think of any other name for

his volunteer band, and a more appropriate name than *Khudai Khidmatgars*—servants of God—could not have been chosen. These volunteer workers were at first intended entirely for the work of social reform, *e.g.*, weaning the Pathans from lawlessness and loot, educating them, making marriages etc. less expensive, and so forth. It was in 1929 that the Khansaheb decided to turn the small body of workers into a full-fledged political organisation to carry out the whole programme of the Congress. The name "Red Shirts" is just a case of giving a dog a bad name and then hanging him. It is possible that the fine vernacular name was found jaw-breaking by some officials who had no knowledge of the vernacular. Ready to see red in anything calculated to organise the community, they saw something "red" in the red shirts! The Brothers tell me that the uniform was originally pure white khaddar. When it was found that the white khaddar looked dirty in no time, it was decided to give the uniform the brick colour which can hardly be de-

scribed as red. The brick colour has no connection whatsoever with the red colour of Soviet Russia.

The Congress programme the *Khudai Khidmatgars* were carrying out consisted of the picketing of foreign cloth-shops, liquor shops, etc. They were being regularly drilled and taught to take long marches in military fashion. But all weapons were eschewed, including *lathis*. They were under the strictest discipline, and the least little act of disobedience or insubordination meant dismissal. The members on enlistment had to take a solemn oath :—

(1) To be loyal to God, the community and the Motherland;

(2) To be always non-violent;

(3) To expect no reward for services;

(4) To eschew fear and be prepared for any sacrifice;

(5) To live a pure life.

In April 1930 there were not more than 500 *Khudai Khidmatgars*, but the arrest of the Khansaheb gave a fillip to the movement. There were shootings and numerous *lathi* charges which far from suppressing the movement popularised it. I cannot go into the details of these shootings and *lathi* charges. Even if I had all the evidence before me and leisure to sift it, I should not care to put it before the public whilst the whole movement of Civil Disobedience is under suspension and when its author is trying to devise means of preventing a renewal, if it may be at all possible to do so. Suffice it to say that the Brothers have chapter and verse in support of the statements made in the suppressed literature published in vindication of the Brothers and the band of volunteers. The elder brother was an eye-witness to many of the terrible things he has described to me, but with the consent of both the brothers, since the Civil Disobedience movement is suspended, I prefer to draw the curtain over the whole of the tragic events.

But one thing may not be passed over. The charge has officially been levelled against the volunteers of violent conduct. During the whole period of 1930-33 not a single concrete case of actual violence on the part of the "Red Shirts" was adduced. The Peshawar happenings in April 1930 were the subject of two inquiries, official and non-official, and, while both the Suleiman Committee's and the Patel Committee's reports contain some blood-curdling accounts of a ghastly tragedy that was enacted there, there is no mention, in either of the reports or in the evidence tendered by any of the officials, of any *Khudai Khidmatgars* or "Red Shirts." The worst that the Government had to say about them was the following in a proclamation issued by the Chief Commissioner of the Province in May 1930: "You must prevent Congress volunteers, wearing red jackets, from entering your villages. They call themselves *Khudai Khidmatgars* (servants of God). But in reality they are the servants of Gandhi. They wear the dress of Bolsheviks. They will create the same

atmosphere as you have heard in the Bolshevik dominion." What exactly is meant by the statement that they are "nothing but Bolsheviks" it is difficult to say, but not one of the numerous official communiques that were issued after the 23rd April tragedy attempts to implicate any of them in it. Father Elwin did see some officials during his brief visit in 1932 and all that the latter seem to have alleged against the *Khudai Khidmatgars* amounts to this : (1) Some police officers in the districts were insulted and abused; (2) stones and dung were thrown into their cars; (3) stones and brickbats provoked the shooting at Kohat. In a movement the whole strength of which lies in its non-violence, it would not do to minimise even these offences if they were really committed. But it must not be forgotten that the one security against offences of this kind was removed by Government arresting all responsible leaders, and that these offences are negligible when we remember the terrible insults and humiliations heaped upon a brave people.

Need I discuss here the story of the numerous apologies said to have been given by the "Red Shirt" prisoners in order to secure release? The discussion would land me into a rather detailed statement of the other side, which is beyond the purpose of this book. Suffice it to say that the story would seem incongruous and incredible when we know that two men, whose cases I have already mentioned in the first chapter, took their own lives in order to escape the disgrace of payment of security—a disgrace certainly lesser than that of tendering apology. When some day a full and accurate story of the sufferings undergone by these brave Pathans in jails and outside, the losses endured by them of movable and immovable property, and the wonderful endurance shown by them in face of grave provocations, comes to be unfolded, if it must be, it will reveal a record of which any nation might be proud.

## CHAPTER VI

### *THE INDICTMENT AND TRUTH*

WHAT then is the Khan Brothers' offence? All official statements are silent about the elder brother, Dr. Khan-sahib, whose crime would seem to be that he is the brother of one who had become so notorious in the eyes of Government. Here are some of the charges against the younger brother.

(1) "After Mr. Gandhi left for the Round Table Conference, he made an extensive tour in the districts leading the Congress movement at the request of the Working Committee of the Congress."

(2) He disobeyed prohibitory orders and toured the villages, delivered political harangues in mosques, under the pretext of religious sermons.

(3) He preached non-payment of revenue and water rates and persuaded people to refuse to take Government

canal water.

(4) The Red Shirts were "a revolutionary organisation, the object of which is to drive the British out of India by force," and that the Khansaheb was with their help carrying on propaganda in the tribal areas.

(5) The Mohmand territory had been affected by the Congress propaganda in Peshawar.

(6) The Provincial Congress Committee repudiated the Premier's declaration of the 1st December 1931 and repeated the demand for Indian Independence, and the Brothers rejected the invitation to attend the Chief Commissioner's Durbar.

(7) Though stress was laid on the observance of non-violence, people were encouraged to expect some great event, to be united in anticipation of it, and to be ready to resume the struggle which was described as war.

(8) The Khansaheb had always described the Truce as temporary.

(9) He had said at a Conference in Meerut that he had joined the Congress because both the Congress and he had the same object, *viz.*, "to drive the British out of India."

(10) The *Khudai Khidmatgars* had interfered with the law, by compounding cases, or administering justice, or withholding evidence.

The first, sixth, eighth and ninth charges would be admitted by the Khansaheb at once and no serious effort would be made to account these as offences peculiar to him. Many a leader who has been held guilty of these charges is free to-day and has no prohibitory orders against him. That he preached non-payment of revenue, etc. in certain cases is true, but he did so not because there was any no-tax campaign—he himself paid the revenue on his own land—but because the parties in those cases were unable to pay. The second, fourth and fifth charges have no foundation and it was open to Government to prosecute the Khansaheb under

the ordinary law. He stoutly repudiates the charge that he ever preached or countenanced force and declares that if he had done so the movement would easily have taken a violent turn which it never did. The last charge is a compliment to the "Red Shirts" rather than a discredit for them. It only shows how well-organised was the movement, how the "Red Shirts" had carried out effectively the principle of non-co-operation with law-courts, which the other provinces held in common with them but had never been able to carry out effectively.

The ninth charge is worth discussing in some detail, because the Meerut speech was the one thing that the Home Secretary had cited against Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan when he saw him in 1931 at the instance of Gandhiji. Here are some of the worst passages from the official translation of his speeches :—

"If I do not die, I will prevent the English from ruling my country, and

with the help of God I shall succeed.

"People complain against me for having joined the Congress by selling my nation. The Congress as a body is working against the British. The British nation is the enemy of the Congress and of the Pathans. I have, therefore, joined it and made common cause with the Congress to get rid of the British. We should not be deceived by the tactics of the *Firangi*.

"We (the "Red Shirts" and the Congress) have two purposes; first, to free our country, and, secondly, to feed the hungry and clothe the naked.

"Do not rest till freedom is won. It does not matter if you are blown up with guns, bombs, etc. If you are brave, come out on to the battlefield and fight the English, who are the cause of our troubles. The Congress is a society against the English; the English are the common enemies of the Congress and the Pathans. For that reason I have joined the Congress."

Compare these extracts with the extract I have given in a previous chapter from one of his Bardoli speeches. The extracts here given are from the Meerut and the Frontier speeches. Is it not the same brave, truthful, earnest soul speaking out his creed in both? And is it not that in these extracts he figures more as the victim of crude and wooden translators rather than as a fire-eater? He talks indeed in the language of "war", but who did not in those days, who does not even now? But it is not the removal of the British *by force*, as Government have baselessly alleged, but by "being blown up with guns, bombs," as even the official translator owns.

The fact of the matter is that the Truce which two earnest souls had so laboured to bring into being was the *bete noir* of the officials, especially in the Frontier. The trouble with them then and now was and is, *not* that the "Red Shirts" indulged in violence or that the Khansaheb preached the doctrine of force, but that the

worst official violence could not provoke them into violence, that they had so badly become "the servants of Gandhi" (as an official leaflet naively declared) and that they so implicitly obeyed the "Frontier Gandhi."

## CHAPTER VII

### *FACTS ENGLISHMEN MUST KNOW*

BUT the charges we have considered are three years old now. As though three years' imprisonment without trial was not enough punishment for those unfounded charges, the latest traducer of the Khansaheb, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, in an article in the *Morning Post*, has formulated a few more and blamed Government for having accorded the rebels even restricted liberty. The ex-satrap, who spent his early years in the North-West Frontier Province and claims to know the province and its leader better than Government, has tried to shed more "light" by identifying the Brothers with terrorism and Communism, describing the younger Khan as "the daring Afghan revolutionary, Abdul Ghafur (*sic*) Khan, who is known as the 'Frontier Gandhi', though he openly sneers at Gandhi's 'non-violence' cant, and makes no secret of his intentions to expel the British and

organise on the North-West Frontier a Communist republic on the Soviet lines." This, of course, is a revised edition of the original Government indictment which pales into insipidity before this concentrated poison which is the privileged possession of Sir Michael. But look at the foundation on which the edifice of that malicious charge is built. "Abdul Ghafur," he says, "is in close touch with the hostile Frontier tribes and is the son-in-law of our most persistent enemy, the Haji of Turangzai, who has so often in recent years roused the Mohmands, Afridis and other tribes to attack Peshawar itself."

Now for a few facts. Let me say at once that there is as much relationship between the Khansaheb and the Haji of Turangzai as between him and his maligner, Sir Michael O'Dwyer. The Khansaheb's father-in-law was Sultan Muhammad Khan of Rajjar, who, until he died, was a J. P., and whose services, perhaps, Government officials could tell better than the Khans themselves. How, then,

has Sir Michael mixed up the Haji of Turangzai with the Khan's father-in-law? I must try to explain. The Haji belongs to Turangzai, a village within easy distance of Utmanzai, the Khan's village. He became known in 1911 when he started his own schools as instruments for social reform. Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan readily associated himself with the Haji, who may be regarded as the pioneer of national education in the province. This was, perhaps, the time when Sir Michael was a junior civil servant in the province and, as the Haji came later on to obtain a fearful notoriety, Sir Michael thinks it fit to exploit his knowledge of the old association, and, as he does not think it a sin to sacrifice truth for picturesqueness, he makes the Haji the Khansaheb's father-in-law. This is no place to follow the Haji's fortunes, but it is necessary to note here the fact that the Haji's schools were demolished in 1915 and that he fled from his village and has never since returned. He was known to have helped the Afghans against the British in 1919, and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan did meet

him on his way to Afghanistan and back when he led the Khilafat *Muhajarins* (pilgim-exiles) in 1921, but since then he has never seen him or heard of him.

So much about the Haji. Now regarding the Khansaheb's being in league with the tribesmen. It is necessary to note a few facts about the tribal areas. These are the mountainous regions beyond the five British districts and up to the Baluch-Hindukush border, known as "Independent territory" and comprising nearly twice the area of the British districts and having about the same population—all Pathans speaking the same dialect Pushtu, with slight variations. The "independence" of these areas is a misnomer. The Governor of the British districts is the Governor-General's Agent holding sway over these areas, and tribesmen often find themselves no better than pawns on the strategic chess-board of the N.-W. Frontier. They are wild and untamed, and yet they are not so senseless as not to see the awakening that has been going on in

their neighbourhood. That a Pathan could smilingly receive *lathi* blows and worse, without being provoked into a rage, was nothing short of a miracle to these tribesmen. It was enough to interest them as it did some in the neighbourhood, to the extent of joining the movement, and there was nothing surprising in the depredators of the same race and creed wanting to be friends and wanting to throw off a double yoke—the yoke of the tribal chief and that of the British who hold him as a virtual vassal. It is the height of folly to imagine that in the present age it would be possible to play upon the ignorance of a mass of people. The Khansaheb told me that from the contiguous areas of Malakand, Bajor and Swat the tribesmen used to send their children to the Azad School founded by him in 1921 and that these tribes had to some extent identified their fortunes with their brethren in the British districts. Some of them did join the *Khudai Khidmatgars* and went to jail during the last campaign. But the tribesmen beyond

these areas were untouched. Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan does not make it a secret of his intention to make all the tribesmen peace-loving and to weld the whole Frontier into a harmonious whole. But it is just a dream. He has never been allowed to cross the Frontier, so much so that when Sjt. Devadas Gandhi visited the province in 1931 and wanted to see the Chakdhara Bridge, which commands some of the most picturesque scenery in the world, the Khansaheb could not indulge in the luxury of providing this little entertainment to his guest. The bridge is just beyond a stretch of road which passes through the Malakand Agency and Sjt. Devadas Gandhi made it clear to the officers in charge that the Khansaheb and he wanted to go there just for the purpose of sight-seeing. This could not be done in the absence of previous arrangement! All that we hear at the present moment about the tribesmen is that the British districts are often the victims of their depredations. Let Sir Michael O'Dwyer know that the Khansaheb's faith in non-violence is so great

and his allegiance to Gandhiji so perfect that the Khansaheb once thought it fit to ascertain whether in case of an attack by dacoits or bandits Gandhiji would allow a *Khudai Khidmatgar* to use force in self-defence.

What a gross calumny is contained in that statement of Sir Michael, wherein he says that the Khansaheb "openly sneers at Gandhi's non-violence cant," will be apparent from a statement of the Khansaheb made in 1931. The Khansaheb never denies that his province is more "murderous" than other provinces, as a Government report declared the other day. But he also declares it to the world that it is to make it less murderous, and, if possible, to rid it of all violence and murder that he has adopted non-violence as a creed. Nothing but non-violence can bring peace to that distracted province and the Khansaheb hit upon the sovereign remedy long before Satyagraha had become current coin in India.

No man of goodwill will fail to re-

cognise the fervour and sincerity of Khan-saheb's own words in this connection uttered as far back as 1931 and published in *Young India* dated June 11, 1931.

"My non-violence has almost become a matter of faith with me. I believed in Gandhiji's *ahimsa* before. But the unparalleled success of the experiment in my province has made me a confirmed champion of non-violence. God willing, I hope never to see my province take to violence. We know only too well the bitter results of violence from the blood-feuds which spoil our fair name. We have an abundance of violence in our nature. It is good in our own interests to take a training in non-violence. Moreover, is not the Pathan amenable only to love and reason? He will go with you to hell if you can win his heart, but you cannot *force* him even to go to heaven. Such is the power of love over the Pathan. I want the Pathan to do unto others as he would like to be done by. It may be I may fail and a wave of violence may sweep over my province. I will then be content to take the verdict of fate against me. But it will not shake my ultimate faith in non-violence which my people need more than anybody else."

And now for a few facts about the Khans' family which must disabuse the Britisher of all fears about their anti-

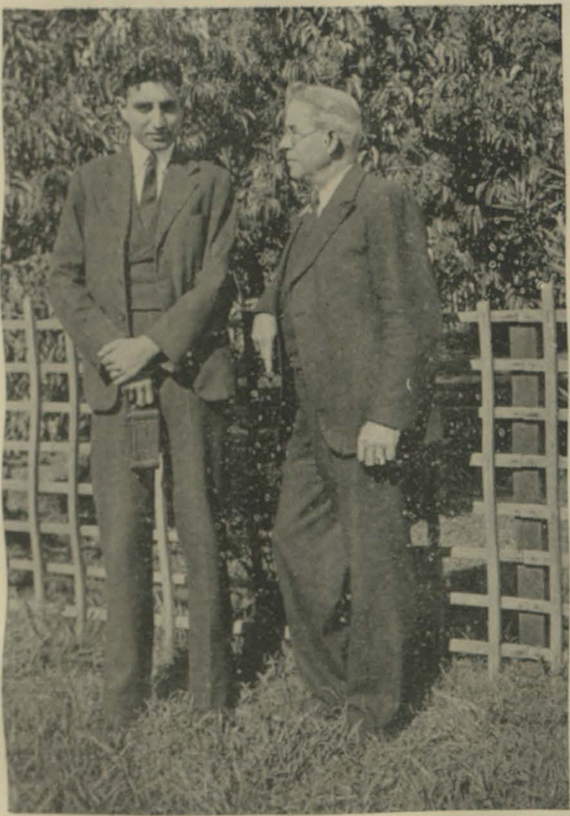
British temperament or activities. I shall introduce to the reader some of the principal members of the Khans' family. The reader knows, of course, that the elder Khan has an English wife. He may not know that when she was in India, before the imprisonment of her husband, her house (now acquired by Government for a pittance) was open to all kinds of friends among whom there were numerous officials. The wife of the present Governor, Col. Sir Ralph Griffith, used to be a great friend of hers and the Colonel himself was not unoften the Doctor's guest.

One of Dr. Khansahib's sons has just passed his London Matriculation and proposes to prosecute his studies at Oxford. His own daughter and Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan's own daughter, who was until a month ago in Mrs. Khansahib's care both read in an English school. The elder Khan's eldest son (by his first wife), Sadullah Khan, finished his education and took his degree in Civil Engineering from Loughborough Engineering College and

returned from England in 1930. The second son, Obeidulla Khan, who is now known throughout India by his 78 days' hunger-strike, learnt tanning in a Madras college and had obtained his passport to go to England for further education in tanning when he was arrested for non-payment of rent. Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan's eldest son spent two years in England and several years in America learning sugar-refining, in order that he might be useful on his paternal estate (which has now, under the Ordinance rule, gone to pieces), and was until a little while ago in Poet Tagore's Shantiniketan. His second son until a few days ago was in Col. Brown's school at Dehra Dun, from which he passed his Senior Cambridge examination. His youngest son is still in this school.*

I mentioned Rev. Wigram in an earlier chapter. Both the brothers were the good clergyman's pupils and both

*In wardha at present.



ABDUL GANI KHAN WITH HIS AMERICAN PROFESSOR

still cherish his memory. When they grew up, they kept up their acquaintance with the Wigrams, which ripened into close friendship, and Dr. Khansahib still recalls with gratitude that it was entirely due to the good offices of Dr. Wigram, Rev. Wigram's brother, and now the Principal of the Livingstone College, that he could get admission into St. Thomas' Hospital in London. Dr. Khansahib has numerous friends in the Indian Medical Service to which he once belonged. Some of the Brothers' English friends continue to be friendly and write affectionate letters.

Dr. Khansahib is a member of the Peshawar Club, the members of which are almost all military officers, and is a Scout Commissioner. I am writing this open to correction, lest he should have been removed from the Club and the Scout Commissionership during his incarceration. I have already mentioned his relations with the officials (even the highest) before his incarceration. During the incarceration Mr. Robert Brown, a

Scotch and a high official in the Agricultural Department who in the course of his duties used to tour the whole province and who has now retired, wrote to Dr. Khansahib from Australia (his wife's home) a friendly letter in which he recounted the old days of happy friendship and mutual hospitality and, referring to Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, said: "I have never met a more noble and kind-hearted gentleman than Abdul Gaffar Khan." I am giving these personal details, just to tell the reader that these contacts with the English people and this willingness on the part of the Brothers to give their children education in British surroundings, are not things which one is accustomed to associate with "Afghan revolutionaries" and "organisers of a Soviet Republic." Let me also tell the reader that a fanatical section of the Muslim press in the Punjab has not only not spared the Khans for their advocacy of Hindu-Muslim unity, but questioned their allegiance to the Muslim faith on the ground of their having sent their children to England and America for education!

As for the desire imputed to them to establish a Soviet Republic, let it also be noted that the extracts from the younger Khan's speeches that Government have published contain no reference to the Soviet system or to Russia. The last thing they want in India and in the Frontier Province is Bolshevism. They frankly dread the Soviet as much as they dread the British Raj and would gladly sit down to the quiet work of revival of village communities in their districts after which they have set their hearts. "There are numerous weavers in our parts, but they are slowly dying out," said the Khansaheb one of these days, "and I should be deeply thankful if I could spread the gospel of the spinning wheel in our districts." There are about three thousand villages in the five districts of the province and there is practically no village that the Khansaheb has not visited. "But it is no use my talking about the wheel unless I learn to spin and do it regularly myself," said he and sat down to learn spinning and began to spin good, even, well-twisted

yarn in three or four days.

"Show us a truer socialist than Gandhiji," they say to whoever comes to argue the socialist theory with them, "and we shall follow him." And they look back to the days when there used to be a periodic redistribution of holdings in their districts. "The Khanship, which is only another word for a kind of *zamindari*, is the creation of the British," said the younger Khan to me, as he was discussing this redistribution of holdings which I did not quite understand. "Every such Khanship or *zamindari* was created in order to serve as a prop to the new administration that was being established, and I say this in spite of the fact that my grandfather as a Khan was thus placed in possession of hundreds of acres of land. This happened some twenty-five years after the establishment of British rule in 1848. Before that we used to have a *jirga* of all the Khans who numbered all the villages and plots of land in every village and then cast lots. Every twenty

years this thing used to happen. All, including the Khan, used to possess practically the same size of holding and whole populations used to transfer themselves from one village to another under this redistribution system. I could not think of a purer socialism than this."

## CHAPTER VIII

### *THE WHOLE FAMILY IN PRISON*

But I must summarise rapidly the details before the Brothers' final indefinite imprisonment. It would be tedious to discuss in detail the question as to who was responsible for the breach of the Truce, even if we confine it to the N.-W. Frontier Province. It is impossible to have accurate details either. Let us remember, however, that even during the Truce the *Khudai Khidmatgars* were marked out for special persecution for failure to pay the land revenue, though there was no no-tax campaign, the Khans having paid the revenue due from them. I am omitting reference to numerous cases of persecution of a gruesome nature because the purpose of this book is neither to rake up the past nor to frame an indictment against Government. Two comparatively mild cases may, however, be cited, one because it refers to a member of the

Khan family, the other because it is one of those where the facts have not been disputed. Mazulla Khan's case is well-known. A leading landlord and a *Khudai Khidmatgar*, he was put in the lock-up as a defaulter. He wrote to the authorities saying that he had no intention to withhold payment and that he would try to pay up as soon as possible. For a sum of Rs. 2,000 due from him, a motor car, a tonga, a horse and three buffaloes belonging to him were attached. After his release his crops were attached and finally his land worth over Rs. 1,50,000 was attached. Obeidulla Khan, the elder Khan's second son, who has already been referred to in the foregoing chapter, had a large amount due from him on land standing in his name. He had paid the bulk of it, and Rs. 300 was in arrears. He was arrested for this failure and put in a lock-up in Charsadda which was so indescribably filthy that he thought it fit to refuse all food rather than put up with those conditions. The term of his imprisonment was a month and a half.

He had to be on hunger-strike for 38 days before the conditions were improved, and within a couple of days thereafter he was released. He went through his convalescence under his father's care for a month and then went to his village where he was arrested under the Ordinance.

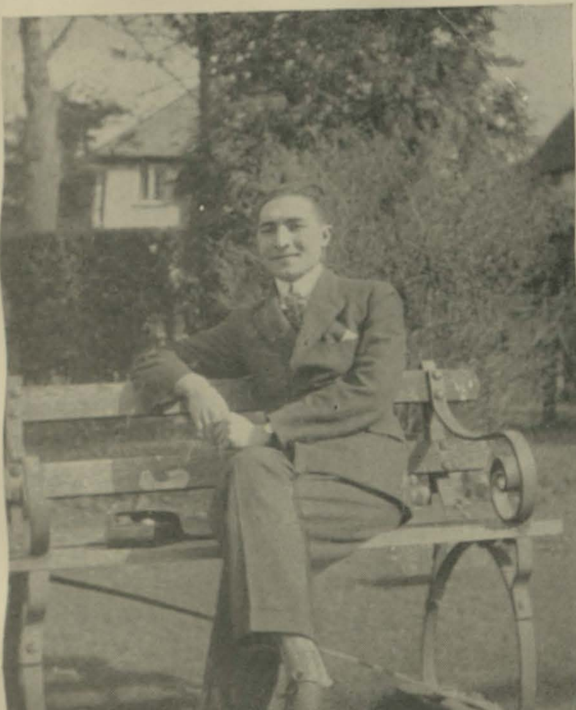
In the communique justifying the Ordinance the Khan Brothers are blamed for several sins of commission which I have summarised in Chapter VI. Until 23rd December when they were invited to attend the Durbar these sins obviously had not assumed the alarming proportions they did on account of their refusal to attend it. No wonder that they should have instinctively refused to accept the invitation when they knew that humiliations and insults were being poured upon the rank and file. But that gave Government the signal to promulgate the Ordinance and to arrest the Brothers with all the important members of the family. The refusal to attend the Durbar is cited as one of the reasons for the promulgation of the Ordinance.



JAWAHARLAL NEHRU, DR. KHANSAHIB, JEEWANLAL KATJU
(*Photo taken in London in* 1910)

Would not the Ordinance have been promulgated if they had attended the Durbar? The younger brother had arranged to go to Bombay to see Gandhiji who was expected to return on the 29th December. The elder had an invitation from Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, whose personal friendship he had made in the days of his study in London, to go and spend the Christmas holidays with him in Allahabad, and he was thinking of going there. But Government had arranged a different Christmas for them. The Brothers were arrested on the night of the 24th and taken to Attock Bridge. Dr. Khansahib's eldest son, Sadulla Khan, who had just returned from England and become Secretary of the Provincial Congress Committee, was also arrested and put on the same special train as his father and uncle. Mrs. Khansahib, who had left for her village two days earlier, and her whole family were aroused at midnight from their slumber and asked to vacate the house to allow the police to effect a thorough search; and Obeidullah Khan,

the second son, who was still convalescing, was arrested. Though the fathers and sons were arrested at the same time, Government would not keep them together. The elder brother was taken off the special train to Naini Jail (Allahabad), the younger brother to Hazaribag Jail, and the elder son Sadulla Khan to Benares Jail. It was not without some outside agitation that the elder brother was transferred later to Hazaribag Jail, to be with his brother. The younger son, Obeidulla Khan, was marked out for special treatment into the details of which I shall have to go presently. All that were left at home were the wives of the elder Khan—the younger has been a widower for over ten years—and their minor children. Their two sisters had taken part in the agitation, as indeed hundreds and thousands of Pathan women who had attended several meetings, but they were not arrested. Their sons were, however, arrested, cousins, near and remote, were arrested, and then followed a wholesale round-up of all the important *Khudai Khidmatgars.*



SADULLA KHAN
*(Dr. Khansahib's eldest son)*

If the younger Khan had been allowed to go to Bombay and if Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had not been arrested on his way to Bombay, the history of the last three years might have been different. If Gandhiji had been allowed an interview with Lord Willingdon even after these two important arrests, which were most flagrant breaches of the Truce and constituted a clear indication of Government hostilities, even then perhaps the history would have been different. Gandhiji wanted nothing more than a discussion of the question of the breakdown of the Truce and was desperately anxious to revive it, if possible. Within a few days of his imprisonment he wrote from jail a letter imploring Lord Willingdon to allow him the interview even as a prisoner, but the Viceroy disdained even to vouchsafe a reply. Reason or no reason, Government were determined to crush the movement and they could not afford to have any truck with rebels.

The brave Obeidulla Khan had already

earned a bad name by his 38 days' hunger-strike. He was taken to Ludhiana, then to Multan, and thence after considerable public agitation to Sialkot Jail, where his health improved and where the climate seemed to suit him. But within a short time he was again transferred, in spite of his protest, to Multan Jail, where immediately on arrival on the 1st of February, 1934, he declared a hunger-strike for Government's persistent refusal to keep him in a place which suited his health. The duration of the strike was unparalleled in the history of this movement for freedom and naturally drew the attention of the whole country. It lasted for 78 days. Government made successful and unsuccessful attempts to feed him forcibly. Perhaps they succeeded when he was unconscious and failed as soon as he was conscious, but they had to yield at last to the iron determination of the Pathan whose life or sanity the hunger-strike had failed to affect. Any other man in these circumstances would have been dead or demented. At the end of 78 days, he was

removed to Sialkot Jail in accordance with his demand and there he remained until his release on 18th August.

Obeidulla Khan's is an instance to record, hardly one to follow. It could not come under the strict definition of Satyagraha, and if he had taken the opinion of the apostle of Satyagraha before he went on hunger-strike, he might not have been given the permission. But he followed the truth as *he* saw it. The value of his act lies in his grim determination and his readiness to throw his life away for the sake of it. The elder Khan proudly narrates the story of the son and says "The boy is a specimen of rare courage and daring." But the courage of the father and the uncle also deserves to be mentioned in this connection. The Brothers were both in Hazaribag Jail following the progress of Obeidulla Khan's fast from the newspapers whenever these cared to print reports of his health. Government never informed them of the boy's health. Neither did they care to apply to Government

for permission to see him or to persuade him to give up the fast. When day after day reports began to come that death was certain, the Brothers decided to send instructions as to how the dead body should be disposed of and where it should be buried. If I remember aright, within a day or two of the actual letter being sent containing these instructions the news came that Obeidulla had won and had broken his fast in Sialkot Jail. In spite of the excruciating ordeal that the son, and more than the son the father and the uncle, had to go through, let me say that there is no bitterness in the mind of the Brothers. The proud father was smiling as he narrated to me the story; there was no bitterness and no loathing as he gave me the details and at the end of it he said: "But there is one thing about this Government. They treated him wonderfully well after the breaking of the fast. The care they took of him left nothing to be desired and it is this after-care for which I am grateful. For that saved his life."



OBEIDULLA KHAN

A word about the youngest son of Dr. Khansahib. Hidayatulla Khan is a student in the Grant Medical College in Bombay. He had gone to Utmanzai just to enjoy his holidays. He had taken no part in the movement and was due to go back to the College. But he too was taken into custody under the Ordinance and suffered six months' imprisonment.

## CHAPTER IX

### *CHARACTERISTICS*

It is these brothers that are bracketed to-day with India's "public enemies," whatever that American phrase may mean. They have made unparalleled sacrifices. They have gone through suffering which few have experienced, and they have still before them years of service during which even their perpetual imprisonment—certainly their freedom—might be an incentive to their people to win their freedom. It is this that alarms the British Government which might not hesitate to have them shot, if it had an iota of evidence to prove that they had on any occasion preached or countenanced actual violence. The secret of their hold on their people lies certainly in their sacrifices and their suffering, but more in their daily life. While the younger brother is a man of God, the elder is a knight *sans peur et*

*sans reproche.* All untruth, unreality, show and glamour produce in them nothing but loathing. Born aristocrats, they have taken to a life the simplicity of which it is difficult to surpass.

When the younger Khan went to Bardoli in 1931, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and others, who went to receive him, sought him in vain in the second class compartments. He came out from the third class with a small hand-bag in which he had just a change of clothes and a time-table! He looks like a true *fakir** and is one. In the midst of the poorest and humblest of his Pathan followers, it would be difficult to distinguish him from the rest. The transparent purity of his life, and his humility and selflessness have a magic

---

**Fakir* (lit. a beggar) is a term used for those who retire from the world and live a life of the spirit. Curiously enough the word *Pathan* has an opposite significance, meaning one who has worldly possessions and who counts in the world. "*Pathan* is not now a racial term, whatever its original significance may have been. It now denotes status, and is said in Swat and Dir to describe one who possesses a share in the tribal estate and who has, therefore, a voice in the village and tribal councils. One who has lost his share is called a *fakir*, forfeits the name of *Pathan* and has no voice in the councils."—Imperial Gazetteer, (Vol. XXVI) The Khansaheb is no longer a Pathan in this sense, and is a true *fakir*.

touch about them. They give him the power to evoke a devotion that asks no questions but yields unflinching allegiance. "All kinds of calumnies have been spread against me by some of the Punjab Urdu papers," he said to me once; "there is a paper which loses no opportunity to make me out to be an enemy of Islam." But he lives his life undeterred by these calumnies. When free he knew no rest. He was always on the move, devising and preaching ways and means for the uplift of the community. He will not use a conveyance when he can walk out the distance, he will select the cheapest means of transport when he cannot do without it. He eschews all luxuries and lives on the simplest fare. No wonder his example is infectious wherever he goes.

He commands implicit obedience and unflinching loyalty because he himself is a model of these virtues. "I am a born soldier, and I will die one," he said when he refused to countenance the move to have him elected President of the

Congress for the year 1934. But he is a soldier who has thousands upon thousands of soldiers ready to obey him and to do his bidding. He is impatient of all cant and hypocrisy and he cannot understand leadership which connotes anything more than the greatest service. He is no new convert to the programme of constructive work. He loathes all programmes which mean show and no constructive work.

He has received rude shocks all his life to his faith in the good intentions of the British and he has seen the policy of "Divide and Rule" working untold havoc everywhere and it is with very great difficulty that he can be persuaded to trust the word of a British official. But personal animosity towards the British he has none, and he would subscribe to every word that Gandhiji has said and written about our attitude to the British people. His brother's friends among the officials are his friends too and it is one of the surprises of his life that the present Governor, who

knows the family so intimately, and who has been both his brother's guest and host often enough, should allow misrepresentations of him and his intentions to go on without contradiction.

But the greatest thing in him is, to my mind, his spirituality or better still the true spirit of Islam, *viz.*, submission or surrender to God. He has measured Gandhiji's life all through with this yardstick and his clinging to Gandhiji can be explained on no other ground. It is not Gandhiji's name and fame that have attracted him to Gandhiji, nor his political work, nor his spirit of rebellion and revolution. It is his pure and ascetic life and his insistence on self-purification that have had the greatest appeal for him, and his whole life since 1919 onwards has been one sustained effort for self-purification. I have the privilege of having a number of Musalman friends, true as steel and ready to sacrifice their all for Hindu-Muslim unity and for the motherland, but I do not yet know one who is greater than or even equal to

Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan in the transparent purity and the ascetic severity of his life, combined with extreme tenderness of feeling and living faith in God. "Whenever a question of great pith and moment arises in Gandhiji's life and Gandhiji takes an important decision," he said to me once, "I instinctively say to myself, 'That is the decision of one who has surrendered himself to God, and God never guideth ill.' I have taken all Gandhiji's fasts as unquestionably directed by God." When questioned about Gandhiji's statement on his proposed retirement, he said: "I am not surprised that he has come to this conclusion. I have never found it easy to question his decisions, for he refers all his problems to God and always listens to His commands. Every great reformer has been like that and there always comes a stage in every reformer's life when he must take leave of his following and soar with ample pinion untrammelled by their limitations and weaknesses. But he does not by doing so limit, but increases, the reach and sweep of his services.

After all I have but one standard of measure and that is the measure of one's surrender to God." That is how he judges men and things and would be judged.

The elder brother is of a different type. He has travelled far and wide, has met all sorts and types of men, and has looked as much out of himself as the younger has tried to look within. While the younger loves to retire occasionally in the inner sanctum, the elder brother would go out to develop fresh contacts. While the younger pins his faith on more and more self-discipline, the elder takes life easy and would not bother to demand of it and human nature more than they can give. He is a born sportsman. He led the cricket team of his college, and while in London played not only excellent cricket but distinguished himself in soccer. And thus he has taken life in the spirit of sportsmanship. It was perhaps more difficult for him to burn his boats and embrace the hazards of political life so late in life as 1931-32,

after years of comfortable ease, than it was for the younger brother who received his baptism of fire at the early age of 29 and then took to a life of suffering like fish to water. But the Doctor took it all in a spirit of sportsmanship. He knows that if life holds its sweets for us in an ample measure, even so does it not withhold its bitters from us. The younger brother would prefer to enjoy the sweets through the bitters of life.

The younger brother places the greatest emphasis on self-restraint and even revels in it. The elder accepts it with a cheer when the occasion comes. Talking once about smoking, the Doctor told me that he was once such an addict that he smoked nothing less than fifty cigarettes a day, but in 1931 he felt that imprisonment which was so much in the air would claim him one day and therefore decided never to smoke. He has not touched tobacco since. But Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan has never smoked at all.

Dr. Khansahib told me a story which

I must record here. Col. Sandeman, the son of Col. Sir Robert Sandeman, of Quetta fame, was on a visit to Peshawar with his "Guides" during the Truce. There was great unhappiness in the minds of the officials over the Truce and Col. Sandeman did not disguise the feeling from his friend, Dr. Khansahib. The Doctor said to him: "No, Col. Sandeman, dismiss the thought of your having been defeated entirely out of your mind. Political life is a game in which the victor and the vanquished must shake hands with one another as much as in a game of football or cricket. And here in this instance there is no question of a victory. We have just had a draw in which there is no victor and no vanquished." And with this he immediately put the official at ease. When they parted from each other the soldier said: "Well, well, we have known each other so well that I hope and pray the Guides may not have to be guilty of anything bad in Charsadda."

The younger meets his opponents in a purely religious spirit, the elder approaches

them in a purely practical one. Whilst thus the elder has patience with the bitterest opponents, the younger would find it difficult to negotiate with them beyond a certain limit. The elder can talk away with students, joking with them and bantering them, the younger would find it difficult to make friends with boys wasting their time over a useless education. He has his obvious angularities from which the elder brother does not seem to suffer at all. But no one knows his limitations better than Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan. Dr. Khansahib did not take long to be persuaded to contest the Assembly seat from Peshawar, no one would have dared to make the suggestion to the younger. The elder would not hesitate to go on a diplomatic mission, the younger would instinctively shrink from it. Each is the complement of the other and they make a unique pair—so different and yet so similar in their transparent sincerity, stern, unflinching loyalty, doggedness of purpose, and warmth and tenderness of attachment. Both love to call themselves *Khudai Khidmatgars*—servants of

God—and the lives of both are a serious endeavour to deserve that difficult name.

---



KHAN ABDUL GAFFAR KHAN, DR. KHANSAHIB,
SETH JAMNALAL BAJAJ
*(Photo taken a day before the Khansaheb's arrest on December 8, 1934)*

## CHAPTER X

### *IN THE REAL HOME AGAIN*

THIS chapter is going in as a postscript to the chapters which are already in the press. The Khansaheb's arrest on a charge of sedition tempts me to bring the book up-to-date.

Ever since their release from Hazaribagh jail the Brothers had, on the cordial invitation of Seth Jamnalal Bajaj, made his house in Wardha their home. The fact that Gandhiji had already been staying in Wardha as the good Sethji's guest decided them in their choice, for they had come out of prison with the determination to place themselves at Gandhiji's disposal and to be guided entirely by him. They visited some places in the Central Provinces, also Bengal and a few places in the United Provinces, during the interval, but all these programmes were practically arranged for them by Gandhiji. And I am giving no secret away when

I say that every time the Khansaheb went out of Wardha, he did not do so without taking detailed instructions as to what he should say and how he should say it. The elder brother would not have cared to contest the Assembly seat for his province but for Gandhiji's advice, and when during the election campaign one of the brothers felt that perhaps permission might be asked for Dr. Khansahib to visit the Frontier for the restricted object of the election campaign, it was at Gandhiji's advice that the plan was dropped. The Khansaheb would not even consent to open the All-India Swadeshi Exhibition without Gandhiji's approval, and the Bombay friends had to appeal to Gandhiji to make him accept the invitation. I may even say that the Khansaheb would not have accepted the membership of the Working Committee of the Congress but for Gandhiji's insistence. He is never tired of repeating that he is no good for offices and for politics, and he would be content to be a humble worker. He was free to attend the sittings of the Work-

ing Committee in Patna, but he stayed away saying that his presence was in no way necessary for the discussion of the agenda that had been fixed. Quiet, speechless work in the villages is after his heart and when Gandhiji decided to have him on the executive of the All-India Village Industries Association he had no hesitation in agreeing.

As for the elder brother, he has perhaps made more friends than even the younger, because of a wonderful geniality and playfulness of spirit that would seem almost foreign to the stern, ascetic nature of the younger. Dr. Khansahib, without the slightest ceremony or fuss, took upon himself the task of treating and nursing the patients in Jamnalalji's household which is ever widening with the numerous friends coming to Wardha to meet Gandhiji and to attend various meetings. He then offered his services for the women's and girls' Ashrams in Wardha which were gratefully accepted, and quite recently he began going out to the villages in the vicinity on

a medical and sanitary mission, tramping ten to fifteen miles a day. And no job is too humble for this ex-I. M. S. I have seen him sitting down at the bedside of his patients fomenting them, and sometimes cutting vegetables for a vegetable soup which is his special prescription for a convalescent. Of an early morning he would come to the Ashram to join Gandhiji in his morning walks. He would follow him unobtrusively without even exchanging a word and walk back home after a visit to the Ashram patients, if any.

In the history of the Congress it would be difficult to find two greater instances of steadfast loyalty and spontaneous allegiance.

Even in their domestic affairs the Brothers have not hesitated to take Gandhiji into their confidence. During his brief stay in Wardha as Jamnalalji's guest, Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan had opportunities to see the women's and girls' Ashrams at work. The simplicity



*Back* : MIRABEN, SHRIMATI JANKIDEVI BAJAJ
*Middle* : MEHRTAJ KHAN SETH JAMNALAL BAJAJ, UMA BAJAJ
*Front* : ABDUL ALI KHAN, RAMKRISHNA BAJAJ

of life there, the atmosphere of peace, purity and freedom and the insistence on manual labour, captured his heart and he expressed his desire to ask his little girl who was in London in charge of her aunt to return to India and take her training in the girls' Ashram at Wardha. It was a brave and noble decision, but if a Pathan girl could be sent out to England and could be educated in an English school, why should she find any difficulty in making the Wardha Kanya Ashram her own school? And where could the father find better people than the Head of the Ashram and Miraben to look after his girl? That was how the Khansaheb argued, and Gandhiji had no hesitation in cabling to Miraben to bring little Mehrtaj with her. Both travelled deck on an Italian boat and reached Wardha on the 22nd November.

The girl saw her father after a year and a half, but there was her younger brother in Col. Brown's school in Dehra Dun who had not seen his father for four

years now. Little Abdul Ali met his father during his U.P. tour and came to Wardha with him on the 4th of December.

Imagine the wrench that these little children must have experienced when the news reached their ears on the evening of the 7th December that their father had been arrested. The little lad of twelve asked Jamnalalji, as the latter broke the news to him: "But why should my father be arrested, when you and Mahatmaji and all the rest are free?" "Because," said Jamnalalji, consoling the sobbing boy, "he is said to have made a seditious speech in Bombay"—which reply landed Jamnalalji in an explanation of sedition simple enough for the boy to understand.

But the father had no tears to mix with the children's tears. He knew that he had been blessed with a friendship which would grow with increasing tests and trials and would never diminish—the friendship with Gandhiji and Jamnalalji to whom he could entrust his children without the slightest anxiety. These few

days in Wardha have brought the two brothers and their two hosts, Jamnalalji and Gandhiji, so close together that both the guests and the hosts have developed spiritual kinship and brotherhood. There have been hardly any political talks between them, but spiritual communings —prayerful and silent—there have been quite enough, and it has been an ennobling experience for everyone here to see the Khansaheb coming daily to the Ashram to attend the Tulsi Ramayana reading that Gandhiji has every morning, and very often to attend the morning and evening prayers. "The music of that *bhajan* fills my soul," he said to Pyarelal, one of these days, "please put the words down in the Urdu script and give me an Urdu translation of it." Essentially of a retiring disposition, he likes nothing so much as quiet prayer and silent work, and it was for both these objects that he had decided to bury himself in the villages of Bengal. He had had an ocular demonstration of the potency of *khadi* when he visited the poor Musalman peasants in Bengal in their humble cottages a

couple of months ago, and he had wanted to carry the message of revival of village industries to them. He was to have left for Bengal on the 9th of December, but Jamnalalji insisted on his staying for the first meeting of the shortly-to-be-created Board of the Village Industries Association, and so his departure was put off until the 15th. We were really thinking and talking of his work in Bengal when the District Superintendent of Police appeared on the evening of the 7th with a warrant of arrest for him. Always prepared for such summons, the great Pathan said he was ready the very minute the warrant came. But he was allowed some time to meet his friends, brother and children. As he was preparing to go, Gandhiji said: "Well, Khansaheb, this time we are going to offer defence unlike previous occasions." The Khansaheb was rather taken aback. He said he was loath to take a course different from the one he had been taking since 1919. "I see your feeling in the matter," said Gandhiji, "but this is not the occasion. We do not want to go to jail, if we can

help it." And straight came the reply: "Just as you wish, then." Another instance of his beautiful allegiance.

It was a wrench to the elder brother to be torn away from a brother who had shared his joys and sorrows for over three years in jail and during the hundred days of their restricted freedom. But the younger had no sorrow on this personal account. He asked the little children to be brave and to learn the lesson of simplicity and self-discipline under the kind care of their adopted parents, Gandhiji and Jamnalalji.

But one sorrow seemed to cast a faint shadow over his face. "How I wish I had been able to fulfil my promise to the poor Musalmans in the Bengal villages! I had promised to live and work amongst them, and I may not now do even that little service." And, pausing awhile, he said in accents of deep pathos : "As regards the Frontier, I do not know what to say. Let my arrest not provoke my people into acts of rashness. Let

them take it calmly and with cool courage sit down to the quiet work of ending their internal dissensions and uniting themselves. I am grieved that, while all sorts of aspersions are cast on us, we are allowed no opportunity to prove that they are wrong. A Government report describes my province as a 'murderous province.' But what opportunities have they given us for even the non-political work of education and social reform among the simple ignorant Pathans?"

But as the moment for departure for Bombay approached even this sorrow had disappeared, from the mind of this true servant of God. "I am quite certain," he said to Jamnalalji and his good wife, Janakidevi, as he took leave of them, "I am quite certain that it is all God's doing; He kept me out just for the time He wanted to use me outside. Now it is His will that I must serve from inside. What pleases Him pleases me."

THE END